

Special Education Advisory Panel
October 7, 2004
Minutes

Members Present

Deana O'Brien
Jeaneal Alexander
Theresa Valdes
Kent Kolaga
Joan Zavitsky
Lynda Roberts

Eileen Huth
Trish Grassa
Pam Walls
Ray Wicks
Steve Viola
Barbara Scheidegger

Shirley Woods
Tamara Arthaud
Patti Simcosky
Pat Jackson

Members Not Present

Dan Colgan
Nan Davis
Melodie Friedebach
Dennis Gragg

Michael Hanrahan
Rebecca Largent
Cathy Meyer
Eric Remelius

Jo Sartorius
Mary Kay Savage
Richard Staley
Dennis Von Allmen

DESE Staff Present

Karen Allan
Dale Ridder

Debby Parsons
Dale Carlson

Mary Corey
Kate Numerick

Call to Order/Introductions – Deana O'Brien called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of Minutes – Kent Kolaga recommended the following changes to the August minutes.

- In the "Approval of Minutes" paragraph, it should read that Pam Walls seconded the motion to consider formal recommendation #6 closed not Mike Hanrahan.
- In the next paragraph, in the sentence beginning with "Under Formal Recommendation...", the word he should be changed to Kent.
- Under Subcommittee Reports, under the Rules and Regulations section, the second sentence should read "Kent Kolaga suggested and it was assigned to the Rules and Regulations subcommittee to take the lead on the extraordinary cost fund and the regulation changes."

Kent Kolaga made a motion to approve the minutes with the above changes. Pam Walls seconded the motion. Motion passed

Formal Recommendations

Formal Recommendation #3 – Kent Kolaga indicated that the reason the panel requested clarification of "appropriate" was because the panel wanted to be able to give technical assistance and guidance information to individuals participating in IEP team meetings. He wanted to know if something like that was currently available. Debby Parsons indicated that information is contained in the measurable goals and objectives and she suggested sending excerpts of the curriculum to the monitoring subcommittee. If anyone else is interested in the information, contact Lina Browner. Karen Allan will bring an entire copy of the curriculum and discuss this information with the panel at the next meeting.

Formal Recommendation #6 – Deana O'Brien indicated that even though this formal recommendation is considered "done," it was suggested at a previous meeting that a new formal recommendation, along these lines, could be recommended at a later date if the panel wanted to follow through further. Kent Kolaga indicated that he did not feel that this item required anything further at this time.

Formal Recommendation #8 – Kent Kolaga indicated that the current suggested survey contains three questions. DESE’s recommendation is to try this survey for a year and then make changes to it if needed. Debby Parsons indicated that language may need to be added to the letter/survey indicating that the information will be kept anonymous. DESE staff will be directed to ask these questions when taking a withdrawal over the phone. Kent indicated that his subcommittee is recommending that DESE try this for a year and see what data is collected. Pam Walls would like a report on when the surveys were started, how many surveys were sent out, how many were returned, and any issues raised. Those receiving the survey will be asked to return it within two weeks. Parents will be provided a self addressed stamped envelope. Surveys will be sent out immediately for withdrawals for 2003-04 and for those that have come in since July 1, 2004. Debby indicated that at the next panel meeting the division may be able to give the Panel some preliminary data. Kent Kolaga made a motion to accept this letter/survey. Pam Walls seconded. Kent made a revision to his motion to also include that formal recommendation #8 be considered done. Pam accepted Kent’s revision to the motion. Motion passed.

Formal Recommendation #9 – DESE is checking on what procedures other states have. Debby Parsons indicated that the Division is still collecting the data and suggested having Pam Williams attend the next panel meeting to present an update on this item.

Public Comment Section - Eileen Huth indicated that she presented information about the Panel at the recent LDA conference. She discussed the CIMP process and the Annual Report. She directed them to the Panel’s website. She will also write up her results from a parent/teacher survey and will send to Steve Viola.

Barbara Scheidegger handed out information indicating some student and district concerns. Debby Parsons indicated that for issues like this, the Compliance Section should be contacted. Debby will talk with Barbara further to get contact information.

Pam Walls indicated that there are a lot of these types of issues being seen in her area also. She felt that homebound is used a lot and there is an issue about the number of hours of service is provided (five hours). Debby Parsons indicated that the Department is looking into this program. Pam indicated that this issue and others concerning child complaints/due process have been brought to the Panel and she feels that it is the system that DESE runs that is the problem. She feels that things are getting worse instead of better. Debby suggested having someone come from the Compliance Section to discuss these types of issues further (i.e., how staff is trained to handle calls, how phone calls are logged, etc.) Debby also suggested that if panel members had specific issues/examples, they should share that information with Pam Williams, Director, Compliance Section.

Kent Kolaga indicated that there have been items/concerns that have been brought to the panel and that a group from the panel put together a list which DESE did not respond to. Joan Zavitsky indicated that she did not recall seeing a list and that if someone had a copy, she would like a copy. Dale Carlson indicated that the panel now has a formal process that is tracked for making recommendations. This process should be used if there are concerns that the panel would like for DESE to address.

Barbara Scheidegger indicated that the system of care grant is working on collaboration. She shared a positive story about a district working with a parent to make sure that the student received services.

Problem Solving (handout) - Ray Wicks indicated that he asked had Melodie Friedebach and Joe Sartorius to put this item on the agenda because of some experiences he had in St. Louis last month. He was told in two cases that there was a new initiative in DESE that would impact how kids with a learning disability would be identified. It would mean that the standard deviation difference would take a lesser role. He was disturbed by this. First, because he was told quite clearly that this was a DESE initiative and had not heard anything about it. Second, is that this would require a lot of training of special education and regular education teachers to implement.

Karen Allan, Assistant Director, Effective Practices Section, and Dale Ridder, Supervisor, Effective Practices Section, indicated that this is only a portion of what their section is all about. Their section looks at the professional development that teachers need in order to improve the performance of kids with disabilities. They use the RPDC and the train the trainer approach to provide training to teachers in school districts. Karen indicated that there is a need for general education teachers to have training so that they are able to provide instruction to students with disabilities. The division is looking at ways to break down the barriers between special education and regular education. Overviews of the training modules have been provided higher education institutions so that they can incorporate it into their curriculum. Many of the modules are being developed for regular and special education teachers. There needs to be more collaboration between general education and special education. DESE is training regional and district trainers. The division hopes to see some difference in performance outcomes within the next three years. A program evaluation model has been created to be used by districts to evaluate their programs (it is available on the division's webpage). Ray indicated that more information needs to be made available to the general public and private school administrators. Karen indicated that the information is posted on CISE's (Center for Innovations in Education) website. The division did not want this to become a "special education" thing but instead wanted to make sure that our general education partners are also promoting this initiative. Karen indicated that school districts are accessing the training through the RPDCs or by contacting CISE or DESE. Any public or nonpublic school can assess the training. Schools can have their own in-school trainer.

Karen indicated that as part of Reading First, it is a requirement that special educators in K-8 be involved and participate in the same professional development as general educators. Ray Wicks felt that nonpublic schools in Missouri have not been able to adequately access Reading First services. Karen indicated that districts should not wait for students to fail before providing special education services, rather the interventions need to be built in for kids who are struggling. The new state improvement grant includes having the RPDC work with districts with the greatest needs. Karen indicated that in this initiative a teacher support team is used to discuss the needs of the student and what interventions are available. Debby indicated that there needs to be a philosophical shift. All kids can learn and all kids learn differently. Eileen Huth asked Karen if she could review her research information.

DESE Update

Reports/Miscellaneous Discussion - Kent Kolaga wanted to know if, as part of the MSIP process, DESE looks at the kind of training districts are spending their money on? The state does look at the types of training districts are sending their staff to. Any professional development needs to be high quality and linked to their comprehensive school improvement plan and that is why they are going to embed training because they can easily get the training shared with the staff in the district. Districts have to meet the one percent rule (one percent of their basic formula – state general education funds). If the district does not, they lose all of their state funds for the next school year.

Special Purpose Funds (handouts) - Dale Carlson indicated that DESE has a pool of money that is set aside to assist with high cost needs for some students with disabilities. In the FY 06 legislative request, DESE is asking for funds for a new special purpose fund, Severely Handicapped Contract Placement (SHCPR) fund. If a student is eligible to go to a State School for Severely Handicapped (SSSH) but the district elects to educate the student in the district, that district is then eligible to receive funds from the severe disabilities fund. Dale provided the panel with background information for the special purpose funds and would like for the panel to provide legislative advocacy to keep these funds in future years. These are not mandated funds.

Committee Reports

Evaluation (handout) - Lynda Roberts indicated that the Annual Report is almost complete. Lynda is waiting on three subcommittee reports. Once she receives this information, she will send it to the panel for their review. Questions, corrections, and additions will need to be sent to Lina Browner. Lynda hopes to have the report in final form so it can be approved at the December meeting.

Nominations - Current vacancies for the panel include a charter school representative and two parent vacancies. The two parent vacancies are about to be filled. For the charter school representative, it would be best to have an administrator or a teacher but it would be acceptable to have someone from a sponsoring group. It was suggested that the nominations committee send out a letter (on panel letterhead) to the charter schools on behalf of the panel asking them for nominations (include in the letter a description of the panel's responsibilities, copy of the nomination form, and include the panel's web address). Barbara Scheidegger will draft a letter and sent to Lina who will send it to the charter schools.

Public Comment - The public comment subcommittee has been discussing (via conference call) the option of conducting regional public meetings next spring (where, how, and the role of the facilitator). It was suggested that three people mediate each meeting and possibly have someone from DESE attend. It was also suggested that the meetings should be held at neutral sites (libraries, banks, etc.) rather than at a school district. Dennis Von Allmen was taking notes during the conference call and will be presenting a recommendation to the Panel.

No update from the Rules and Regulations, Monitoring, or Programs subcommittees.

Special Education Personnel Reporting on Core Data (handout) – Some dramatic changes were made this school year to the teacher and aide data collection since up to this time, there had not been a good reporting system for teachers. No changes were made to the case management piece for caseload used for funding and compliance purposes. DESE will now be collecting information on how teachers are spending their time by adding direct service instruction lines. A Q&A has been posted on the Division's website to assist districts in completing the screens.

Elementary Achievement – (handouts)

Mary Corey, Director, Data Coordination, handed out and discussed with the group the Progress at a Glance document for elementary achievement. Kate Numerick, Director, Effective Practices, handed out and discussed with the group the status update for the Annual Performance Report/Improvement Plan. The new updated district profile reports are now available on the web. The RPDC consultants will be contacting school districts that have been identified through data analysis and offering them assistance. The consultation will be assisting the districts in doing data analysis to determine root causes and what needs to be done. State Improvement Grant (SIG) funds can be used to assist districts in professional development if needed. DESE has not received a letter back from OSEP in response to our letter to them.

Future Meeting Dates – The panel members seemed to prefer one day meetings and suggested they be on Fridays. Future meeting dates/locations are as follows:

December 3, 2004 – Truman Bldg, Room 750
February 18, 2005 – Truman Bldg, Room 500
April 15, 2005 – Truman Bldg, Room 500
June 17, 2005 – Truman Bldg, Room 500

NOTE: Working lunch was at 12:00 p.m.

Adjournment - Pam Walls made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Pat Jackson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.